

THE PENTATETTE



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The Newsletter of the Limerick Special Interest Group

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The LIMERICK SIG, Box 365, Moffett CA 94035 is a Mensa Special Interest Group which is open to everyone. Membership in this club is \$20 per year [Oct-Sep] for Mensa members and non-members. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of individual members and are not the opinions of American Mensa Ltd., which, being rather insipid, is opinionless.. Contributions of limericks, book reviews, articles, comments, etc. (diskette or hard copy) are encouraged. The SIG Coordinator is Arthur Deex.

Oct 92 Ode to a Grecian Yearn

"If we let the Greeks in, they'll betray us,"
Helen warned Trojan wives from her dais.
"I fear men'll flay us,
I fear men'll slay us,
But mostly I fear—Menelaus!"

Laurence Perrine

Nov 92 Veddy Briddish Limericks

There lives a loose lady in London;
Reproductively, she's a fecund 'un:
To count all her children
Is simply bewildren—
And the Health Service covers the fundin'!

Norm Storer



A limerick is not a form of poetry, it is a form of verse. Much poetry is also written in verse, but poetry soars higher, plunges deeper, and sails in wider circles. Poetry does things that limericks cannot do—express grief and ecstasy, love and hate. It vividly depicts the grandeur and squalor of our planet; it sends probes into outer space; it brings back reports from the interior of the human heart. A limerick, conversely, is primarily designed to elicit laughter. Its central virtue is to be clever. When it attempts to be much more than that, it does so at its peril.

It is not its brevity that keeps the limerick from achieving the higher realms of poetry. Tennyson needs only six lines to depict awesome power and majesty in "The Eagle." The anonymous author of "Western Wind" requires only four to evoke a cry of such passionate yearning that it resonates with undiminished force after five hundred years. Robert Frost captures the essence of a lifetime, animal or human, in his two-liner, "The Span of Life." What chiefly prevents the limerick from such achievements is not its overall brevity, but the brevity of its lines, the quickness of its meter, and the close proximity and consequent insistence of its rhymes...

It is ironic that the form made famous by innocent Lear should so quickly become identified, in the minds of many, exclusively with bawdry. But of course, the limerick is excellently suited for the humorous treatment of all subjects, and sex, so central in our lives, offers an almost infinite variety of phenomena suitable for comic treatment. It is regrettable that the two chief genres into which limericks are usually classified are the printable and the unprintable, but it may be more useful to make a distinction between those designed merely to elicit laughter at aspects of the human condition and those which wish to shock or titillate by the sensationalism of their materials (e.g., the countless limericks relating the outrageous sexual behavior of a pope with one or more nuns)...

Though I tried, at the beginning of this discussion, to draw a sharp line between the limerick and poetry, it is ultimately impossible to do so. The limerick perhaps most nearly trespasses on poetic territory when it is satirical, for satire is often drawn from those deeper wells of feeling and indignation that also give rise to poetry...

Laurence Perrine, *A Limerick's Always A Verse*

Professor Wilkins points out that his *correct* address is:

Dr. Arthur N. Wilkins
210 W. 100th Terrace Apt 202
Kansas City, MO 64110

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DOCTOR LIMERICK DOCTORS LIMERICKS:

Doctor Limerick was truly distressed at the sexist nature of a recent teaser for the Adam & Eve theme.

In the Garden of Eden lay Adam
Complacently stroking his madam,
And loud was his mirth
For on all of the earth
There were only two balls—and he had 'em.

The smug, arrogant attitude of Adam is unacceptable in the Year of the Woman. Doctor Limerick immediately answered the challenge to eliminate any outdated gender superiority that might be associated with the male anatomy.

In the Garden of Eden lay Adam
Complacently stroking his madam,
And loud was his mirth
For on all of the earth
There were only two tits—and he'd pat 'em.

Send your ailing or sexist limericks to DOCTOR LIMERICK DOCTORS LIMERICKS.

☆ ☆ ☆

A LIMERICK PUZZLE:

$$\int_1^{\sqrt[3]{3}} z^2 dz = \ln (\quad)$$

Submitted by Michael Weinstein who received it from a fellow mathematician who got it from an electronic bulletin board where it was allegedly posted by one Gerald Edgar of Ohio State's math department.

PERSONALS:

I would like to pass on a limerick which is #1295 in *The Limerick* by Legman, a book which is, I assume, familiar to most of the readers:

A thrifty old man named McEwen,
Inquired, "Why bother with screwin?
It's safer and cleaner
To finger your wiener,
And besides, you can see what you're doin'.

I could not resist making up a sequel:

But there was another McEwen,
Who did believe in screwin;
He had three wives,
Almost came down with the hives,
And screwin' was almost his ruin.

Joe McEwen
(The other McEwen)

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SOFTWARE REVIEW:

Limericks On-Line (2 programs). London: InSoText Manuscripts, 1992. (Freeware) Fifty-eight and thirty-eight limericks.

InSoText Manuscripts c/o 93C Venner Road, Sydenham, London SE26 5HU, an organization that believes in selling hard copy books and giving away software, has just produced two "computer-books." These are executable programs that display limericks on your computer screen, not unlike reading a book. *Limericks On-Line* first appeared as *A Book of Limericks* by Anna Pest (reviewed in *The Pentatette* in May 1990).. Alexander Baron, the creator, has actually dedicated this work to Anna Pest who is "no longer with us, having moved on to bigger and greater things — well, that wouldn't be difficult" and "Arthur Deex of the Limerick Special Interest Group." The second program contains thirty-eight new limericks.

There is a menu to call up Notes Explanatory (as Norman Douglas would say) and a blurb about how and why a computerized book of limericks came to be. And, of course, to get to the limericks. The program is a little rough running but I expect the bugs to be fixed momentarily. Send Alexander a SASE, or a blank disk, or some money or something and he'll probably send you a copy for your IBM.

The limericks aren't bad at all — though some may be a bit too British too be understood by Americans,

like: Who is Graham Taylor and why won't Peter Walker pay Maggie Thatcher's ransom?

The Decorative Ponce

There was once a decorative ponce
Who designed cards in several fonts
To advertise whores
To perform dirty chores
And satisfy old fellows wants.

The Girl From Norway

There was a young girl, a Norwegian,
Went to bed with a kinky Glaswegian,
She said to him, "Jock,
Whyever's your cock
Exploring my nethermost region?"



SOME LIMERICKS

Collected for the use of Students, & ensplendour'd
with Introduction, Geographical Index, and with
Notes Explanatory and Critical
By Norman Douglas
[Part 10]

There was a young girl who would make
Advances to snake after snake.
She said: "I'm not vicious,
But so superstitious!
I do it for Grandmama's sake."

This poem is obscure. Indeed, I should never have unravelled its meaning but for the fortunate discovery that the lady in question was the granddaughter of Mrs. Ethel Bartlett of Nottingham.

Who remembers Mrs. Bartlett?

Yet she, together with Sir Francis Galton and others, was one of the pioneers of the eugenic cult in England; she wanted to "improve the race." This movement was at first considered something of a fad, and many of its supporters by their wild theories may well have deserved the name faddists. Among these forgotten enthusiasts was Mrs. Bartlett. She is described as a sweet-natured old lady, but rather fanatical. The family still possesses a manuscript of hers which contains a furious denunciation of modern standards of health and intelligence—the result of faulty breeding, and of marriages which should never have been allowed. It goes on to review the parentage of some of the great men of antiquity, and finally asks: "Which of us women would not like to have Alexander of Macedon for a son?" This half-

god among men, she declared, was the offspring of his mother Olympias and a serpent.

Such daring doctrines she must have inculcated into the mind of her granddaughter, and it is pathetic to note how the girl apologizes for appearing *vicious* and how, in describing herself as *superstitious*, she seems to waver between a reverence for the old lady's teaching and the reasonable conviction that unions like that of Olympias would prove sterile save in very exceptional cases.

She died at a ripe age, unmarried, on the 23 March, 1922.

There was an old man of Madrid,
Who cast loving eyes on a kid.
He said: "Oh, my joy!!
I'll buggar that boy,
You see if I don't" — and he did.

Variant to last line:

And he out with his cock, and he did—which, to my way of thinking, is a little gross.

Nothing venture, nothing win; moreover, to the pure all things are pure, and none but the brave deserve the fair. It takes a brave man to act like this in broad daylight ("you see if I don't": who can see at night-time?) and in a town like Madrid, where these practices do not seem to be prevalent. A recently published book, *The Quest* by Pio Baroja, deals largely with the poorer boys of Madrid, and contains not the least hint of such things. But this may prove nothing more than that the author was too decent-minded to give his young friends away.

Some Spanish kids are remarkably pretty, and have the most engaging manners—which they lose soon enough, together with their looks. The old man in the poem no doubt gave this particular one a few chocolates or a packet of cigarettes, or both, and made an appointment for another meeting.

Who wouldn't?

[The following limerick and its discussion are omitted in some editions, e.g., Collection "Le Ballet Des Muses"]

There was a young fellow called Cary,
Who got fucking the Virgin Mary.
And Christ was so bored
At seeing Ma whored
That he set himself up as a fairy.